

NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR  
THE ARTS

WASHINGTON  
D.C. 20506



A Federal agency advised by the  
National Council on the Arts

Research Division Note #35 - October 21, 1991

ARTIST EMPLOYMENT IN 1990

In 1990, total employment in eleven artist occupational groups decreased from 1,571,000 to 1,548,000 (or 1.5%). This was the first decline in employment reported since the 1981-1982 economic recession. In contrast, during 1989, employment in these artist occupations grew by 4.4%. Employment statistics for all occupations, including the eleven artist occupations, are compiled through the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey.

During 1990, there was an increase in the number of unemployed artists in the eleven occupational groups from 46,000 to 60,000. This increase raised the artist unemployment rate from 2.8% to 3.7%, and marked the first year in five consecutive years that the artist unemployment rate has increased rather than decreased. In 1990, the total labor force of artists in eleven occupational areas was down 0.6% from 1989 (1,617,000 to 1,608,000).

These national employment statistics are obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey, which reports employment information on over 325 occupations, including eleven artist occupations. A respondent (16 years or older) is considered employed if during the survey week he/she did any paid work in his/her business, profession, or farm. It is important to note that those holding more than one job are counted in the job in which they worked the most hours during the survey week.

To be considered a working artist in the Bureau of Labor Statistics' survey, one must be working as an artist during the survey week. To be considered an unemployed artist in the survey, one's last job must have been as an artist and lasted at least two weeks, be looking for a job, and not be employed in any other way. The reader should be cautious about comparing these data to other estimates of employment and unemployment in artist occupations as differences in definition and methodology can cause wide variances. 1/

In 1990, the total civilian labor force, both employed and unemployed, was up 0.2% from 1989 (123,869,000 to 124,067,000). This total includes 117,914,000 persons employed (up 0.5% from 1989) and 6,874,000 persons unemployed (up 5.3% from 1989). The civilian unemployment rate (the number of unemployed workers as a percent of the total labor force) was 5.5%, up from 5.3% in 1989.

The labor force for Professional Specialty Occupations, a broad group of occupations that generally require substantial professional training and/or education and includes the eleven artist occupations, increased 2% in 1990 (15,815,000 to 16,132,000). The Professional Specialty Occupations encompass

a wide range of professions such as engineers, lawyers, health care professionals, and social, recreational and religious workers. The total number in this category employed was up 1.7% in 1990 (15,550,000 to 15,818,000). The total number unemployed increased 18.5% (265,000 to 314,000), increasing the unemployment rate to 1.9%.

While employment growth during 1990 was at a much slower pace for professional workers and the civilian labor force as a whole than during 1989, employment levels did rise, 1.7% and .5%, respectively. For the eleven artists occupations, on the other hand, employment declined by 1.5% during 1990.

In 1990, a decrease in employment among the individual artist occupations was noted for architects, designers, musicians/composers, and painters/sculptors/craft-artists/artist-printmakers. Dancers, teachers of art/drama/music, and other artists experienced no changes in employment over the year. An increase in employment among the individual artist occupations was noted for actors/directors, announcers, authors, and photographers.

Unemployment increased for announcers, architects, designers, musicians/composers, painters/sculptors/craft-artists/artist-printmakers, photographers, teachers of art/drama/music, and other artists. Actors/directors and authors experienced no changes in unemployment over the year and only a slight increase in labor force. The unemployment rate for dancers was not calculated because the number of persons in this occupational group is too small for reliable estimates.

#### EMPLOYMENT TRENDS 1983-90

The unemployment rate for artists has increased only one other time since 1983, from 4.7% to 5% (1984-85). The unemployment rate for all civilian workers had dropped continually from 1983 to 1989, from 9.6% to 5.3%; the unemployment rate for 1990 increased from 5.3% (1989) to 5.5% (1990). The Professional Specialty Occupation category had also experienced a continual decrease during the same period from 3% (1983) to 1.7% (1989); the unemployment rate for 1990 increased slightly, from 1.7% (1989) to 1.9% (1990).

The labor force for artists has grown 23.6% since 1983 (1,301,000 to 1,617,000); a slight decrease in the labor force occurred from 1989 (1,617,000) to 1990 (1,608,000). The civilian labor force has grown consistently since 1983 (111,550,000) to 1990 (124,067,000), a 11.2% increase of the period. Professional Specialty Occupation workers have also experienced continual growth since 1983, up 22% (13,219,000 to 16,132,000).

Employment in artist occupations grew 26.6% from 1983 to 1990 (1,223,000 to 1,548,000). Artist employment grew at a faster rate over the period than employment for all civilian workers (16.9%) or professional specialty occupations (23.4%), despite declining by 1.5% between 1989 and 1990.

## INDIVIDUAL ARTIST OCCUPATIONS

These data are based on a sample survey and are subject to sampling errors. Small occupation groups (less than 75,000) are less likely to be accurate than the larger occupation groups. (See note at bottom of Table 1.)

### ACTORS AND DIRECTORS

The unemployment rate for actors and directors in 1990 was 10.6%, up from 10.4% in 1989. The labor force for this group increased 0.9% (107,000 to 108,000), and the number employed increased 1% (96,000 to 97,000). The number of unemployed remained constant at 11,000 from 1989 to 1990. Since 1983 there has been a 52.1% increase in the size of the labor force (71,000 to 108,000) with no increase in the number of unemployed. This has cut the unemployment rate from 15.7% to 10.6%, a 32.5% reduction.

### ANNOUNCERS

The unemployment rate for announcers in 1990 was 5.5%, up from 2.9% in 1989. Increases were noted in the labor force (53,000 to 55,000), the number employed (51,000 to 52,000), and the number of unemployed (2,000 to 3,000). Since 1983 there has been a 34.1% increase in the labor force (41,000 to 55,000), and a 17.9% drop in unemployment (6.7% to 5.5%).

### ARCHITECTS

The labor force for architects continued its steady growth from 1983-89. However, in 1990 the labor force decreased 8.7% from 1989 (161,000 to 147,000). The number of employed dropped 9.6% (157,000 to 142,000). The number of unemployed increased 25% (4,000 to 5,000). Although there was a decrease in the labor force, their unemployment rate rose from 1989 (2.4% to 3.7%). Since 1983 the architects' labor force has grown 36.1% (108,000 to 147,000), the number employed 37.9% (103,000 to 142,000), while showing a 14% decrease (4.3% to 3.7%) in their unemployment rate.

### AUTHORS

The authors labor force experienced an increase of 2.4% in 1990 (from 83,000 to 85,000). The number of employed has held steady at 1,000 and their unemployment rate at 1.4%. Since 1983 the number of employed authors has grown from 62,000 to 84,000, an increase of 35.5%.

### DANCERS

The labor force for dancers dropped 5.9% in 1990 (17,000 to 16,000). The number of employed has held steady at 14,000. The labor force for dancers has risen 33.3% since 1983 (12,000 to 16,000), and employment 40% (10,000 to 14,000). The data on unemployment for dancers is not provided since it was not possible to make reliable estimates given the small size of this category.

### DESIGNERS

The 1990 unemployment rate for designers was 3.2%, up from 2.5% in 1989. There was a 0.2% increase in the labor force (548,000 to 549,000), a 0.6% decrease in the number of employed (534,000 to 531,000), and a 28.6% rise in the total unemployed (14,000 to 18,000). Since 1983 there has been a 32.3% increase in the labor force (415,000 to 549,000) and a 35.1% increase in the number employed (393,000 to 531,000). The number of unemployed persons dropped 18.2% (22,000 to 18,000), cutting the unemployment rate by 38.5% (5.2% to 3.2%).

### MUSICIANS/COMPOSERS

The labor force for musicians and composers decreased 4% in 1990 (174,000 to 167,000) and there was a 4.7% drop in the number employed (170,000 to 162,000). The number of unemployed rose from 4,000 to 5,000, increasing the unemployment rate by 33.3% (2.4% to 3.2%). Since 1983 the labor force dropped 1.8% (170,000 to 167,000). During the period of 1983-90 there has been a 66.7% decrease in the number of unemployed musicians and composers (15,000 to 5,000) and a 62.8% decrease in the unemployment rate (8.6% to 3.2%).

### PAINTERS/SCULPTORS/CRAFT ARTISTS/ARTIST PRINTMAKERS

The labor force for this group decreased 3.5% in 1990 (232,000 to 224,000) and the number of employed dropped 5.2% (229,000 to 217,000). The number of unemployed in this category rose 133.3% (3,000 to 7,000), raising the unemployment rate from 1.3% to 3%. Since 1983 there has been a 16.7% growth in the labor force (192,000 to 224,000) and the number of unemployed rose 16.7% (6,000 to 7,000). The unemployment rate, however, decreased 9.1% (3.3% to 3%).

### PHOTOGRAPHERS

The unemployment rate for photographers rose 63.2% in 1990 from 1.9% to 3.1%. This was due to an 11.4% growth in the labor force (114,000 to 127,000) and a 100% growth in the number of unemployed (2,000 to 4,000). Since 1983 there has been a 6.7% increase in the labor force in this artist category (119,000 to 127,000), a 33.3% reduction in the number of unemployed (6,000 to 4,000), and a 38% reduction in the unemployment rate (5% to 3.1%).

### TEACHERS OF ART/DRAMA/MUSIC (higher ed.)

The labor force for this group rose 2.2% in 1990 (45,000 to 46,000). The number of employed remained steady at 45,000. The number of unemployed increased to an estimated 1,000 for 1990 (the 1989 number was less than 1,000 unemployed causing the unemployment rate to rise 285.7% (0.7% to 2.7%). Since 1983 there has been a 7% increase in the size of the labor force (43,000 to 46,000) and a 7.1% increase in the number of employed (42,000 to 45,000). The number of unemployed remained constant at 1,000 with an increase of 22.7% (2.2% to 2.7%) in the unemployment rate.

#### OTHER ARTISTS

This heterogeneous group of artists not classified elsewhere in the survey (which includes such varied professions as animators, comics, puppeteers, and translators) had a labor force of 84,000 in 1990, up 1.2% from 83,000 in 1989. The number employed in this category remained constant at 81,000. The number of unemployed increased from 2,000 to 3,000 causing a 78.3% rise in the unemployment rate from 2.3% to 4.1%. Since 1983 this category has grown 27.3% (66,000 to 84,000) and the number of unemployed has dropped 40% (5,000 to 3,000). This is reflected in a 42.3% reduction in the unemployment rate (7.1% to 4.1%).

1/One example of disparate methodology is Actors Equity Association's tracking of its members' employment. In its December 1990 issue of "Equity News," the Association reports that its paid membership is 36,178, of whom 14,500 paid members are working under contract with Actors Equity. Actors Equity defines its paid membership as those people who are registered members of Actors Equity, fully paid in dues, and eligible for Equity-contracted work. Consequently, Actors Equity bases its employment figures on the number of work weeks for which the total membership was engaged and compensated in Equity-contract work. Actors Equity does not collect information on the employment status of its membership that did not work under Equity contracts. Therefore, whether these members are holding acting jobs outside of Equity contract, or jobs other than acting, or are without any job is not known. This contrasts with the Bureau of Labor Statistics methodology in which individuals that report having a job are asked to describe it (this provides the basis for occupational classification), and those that report not having a job are asked if they are available to work and have been actively seeking work in the last 4 weeks.

**CAVEATS:** This Research Division Note is the eighth of an annual series utilizing the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) put into effect in the Current Population Survey in 1983. The changes in the occupational classification system improved the consistency in measuring employment in the artist occupational groups. Caution should be used when comparing these data with pre-1983 data.

Research Division Reports and Notes of related interest:

Reports

- #1 Employment and Unemployment of Artists: 1970-1975
- #16 Artist Employment and Unemployment: 1971-1980

Notes

- #2 Artist Employment in 1982
- #7 Artist Employment in 1983
- #11 Artist Employment in 1984
- #15 Artist Employment in 1985
- #22 Artist Employment in 1986
- #29 Artist Employment in 1987
- #31 Artist Employment in 1988
- #33 Artist Employment in 1989

A Sourcebook of Arts Statistics: 1989

Table 1. Artist Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment, 1983-90

Occupation	1990	1989	1987	1985	1983
<b>Total All Civilian workers</b>	<b>124,067,000</b>	<b>123,869,000</b>	<b>119,865,000</b>	<b>115,462,000</b>	<b>111,550,000</b>
Employed	117,914,000	117,342,000	112,440,000	107,150,000	100,834,000
Unemployed	6,874,000	6,528,000	7,425,000	8,312,000	10,717,000
Unemployment rate	5.5%	5.3%	6.2%	7.2%	9.6%
<b>Professional, Specialty Occupations</b>	<b>16,132,000</b>	<b>15,815,000</b>	<b>14,726,000</b>	<b>13,946,000</b>	<b>13,219,000</b>
Employed	15,818,000	15,550,000	14,426,000	13,630,000	12,820,000
Unemployed	314,000	265,000	300,000	316,000	399,000
Unemployment rate	1.9%	1.7%	2.0%	2.3%	3.0%
<b>All Artists</b>	<b>1,608,000</b>	<b>1,617,000</b>	<b>1,558,000</b>	<b>1,482,000</b>	<b>1,301,000</b>
Employed	1,548,000	1,571,000	1,503,000	1,411,000	1,223,000
Unemployed	60,000	46,000	55,000	71,000	78,000
Unemployment rate	3.7%	2.8%	3.5%	5.0%	6.0%
<b>Actors and Directors</b>	<b>108,000</b>	<b>107,000</b>	<b>98,000</b>	<b>91,000</b>	<b>71,000</b>
Employed	97,000	96,000	88,000	77,000	60,000
Unemployed	11,000	11,000	10,000	14,000	11,000
Unemployment rate	10.6%	10.4%	9.8%	15.4%	15.7%
<b>Announcers</b>	<b>55,000</b>	<b>53,000</b>	<b>62,000</b>	<b>54,000</b>	<b>41,000</b>
Employed	52,000	51,000	59,000	51,000	38,000
Unemployed	3,000	2,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Unemployment rate	5.5%	2.9%	4.7%	5.3%	6.7%
<b>Architects</b>	<b>147,000</b>	<b>161,000</b>	<b>136,000</b>	<b>133,000</b>	<b>108,000</b>
Employed	142,000	157,000	135,000	130,000	103,000
Unemployed	5,000	4,000	1,000	3,000	5,000
Unemployment rate	3.7%	2.4%	1.0%	2.2%	4.3%
<b>Authors</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>83,000</b>	<b>86,000</b>	<b>71,000</b>	<b>64,000</b>
Employed	24,000	82,000	85,000	70,000	62,000
Unemployed	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	2,000
Unemployment rate	1.4%	1.4%	.8%	1.4%	2.5%
<b>Dancers</b>	<b>16,000</b>	<b>17,000</b>	<b>16,000</b>	<b>17,000</b>	<b>12,000</b>
Employed	14,000	14,000	15,000	15,000	10,000
Unemployed	-	-	-	-	-
Unemployment rate	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Designers</b>	<b>549,000</b>	<b>548,000</b>	<b>546,000</b>	<b>504,000</b>	<b>415,000</b>
Employed	531,000	534,000	531,000	484,000	393,000
Unemployed	18,000	14,000	15,000	20,000	22,000
Unemployment rate	3.2%	2.5%	2.7%	3.9%	5.2%
<b>Musicians/Composers</b>	<b>167,000</b>	<b>174,000</b>	<b>177,000</b>	<b>163,000</b>	<b>170,000</b>
Employed	152,000	170,000	169,000	152,000	155,000
Unemployed	5,000	4,000	8,000	11,000	15,000
Unemployment rate	3.2%	2.4%	4.7%	6.5%	8.6%
<b>Painters/Sculptors/ Craft Artists/and Artist Printmakers</b>	<b>224,000</b>	<b>232,000</b>	<b>198,000</b>	<b>207,000</b>	<b>192,000</b>
Employed	217,000	229,000	191,000	200,000	186,000
Unemployed	7,000	3,000	7,000	7,000	6,000
Unemployment rate	3.0%	1.3%	3.4%	3.2%	3.3%
<b>Photographers</b>	<b>127,000</b>	<b>114,000</b>	<b>131,000</b>	<b>134,000</b>	<b>119,000</b>
Employed	123,000	112,000	126,000	129,000	113,000
Unemployed	4,000	2,000	5,000	5,000	6,000
Unemployment rate	3.1%	1.9%	4.0%	3.5%	5.0%
<b>Teachers of Art, Drama, and Music (higher ed.)</b>	<b>46,000</b>	<b>45,000</b>	<b>41,000</b>	<b>42,000</b>	<b>43,000</b>
Employed	45,000	45,000	40,000	41,000	42,000
Unemployed	1,000	***	1,000	1,000	1,000
Unemployment rate	2.7%	0.7%	1.6%	2.4%	2.2%
<b>Other Artists**</b>	<b>84,000</b>	<b>83,000</b>	<b>67,000</b>	<b>66,000</b>	<b>66,000</b>
Employed	81,000	81,000	64,000	62,000	61,000
Unemployed	3,000	2,000	3,000	4,000	5,000
Unemployment rate	4.1%	2.3%	4.5%	5.6%	7.1%

\* Data base is too small for reliable estimate

\*\* Not elsewhere classified

\*\*\* Less than 1,000

Note: All the unemployment rates shown in the table (with the exception of the rates for 'All Artists') were calculated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics using unrounded data.

Because these labor force statistics are based on a sample survey, they are subject to sampling errors. Relatively small changes in employment and unemployment in the smaller artist occupations are often not statistically significant. For a more detailed discussion, see Research Division Report #16, Artists Employment and Unemployment 1971-1980, Appendix B, "Reliability of Current Population Survey (CPS) Statistics."

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Table 2. Trends in Artist Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment, 1983-1990

Occupation	Change, 1989-1990		Change, 1983-1990	
	Level	Percentage	Level	Percentage
<u>Total, All Civilian Workers</u>	+198,000	+0.2	+12,517,000	+11.2
Employed	+572,000	+0.5	+17,080,000	+16.9
Unemployed	+346,000	+5.3	-3,843,000	-35.9
Unemployment rate	+0.2%	+3.8	-4.1%	-42.7
<u>Professional Specialty Occupation</u>				
Employed	+317,000	+2.0	+2,913,000	+22.0
Unemployed	+268,000	+1.7	+2,998,000	+23.4
Unemployment rate	+49,000	+18.5	-85,000	-21.3
Unemployment rate	+0.2%	+11.8	-1.1%	-36.7
<u>All Artists</u>	-9,000	-0.6	+307,000	+23.6
Employed	-23,000	-1.5	+325,000	+26.6
Unemployed	+14,000	+30.4	-18,000	-23.1
Unemployment rate	+0.9%	+32.1	-2.3%	-38.3
<u>Actors and Directors</u>	+1,000	+0.9	+37,000	+52.1
Employed	+1,000	+1.0	+37,000	+61.7
Unemployed	0	0	0	0
Unemployment rate	+0.2%	+1.9	-5.1%	-32.5
<u>Announcers</u>	+2,000	+3.8	+14,000	+34.1
Employed	+1,000	+2.0	+14,000	+36.8
Unemployed	+1,000	+50.0	0	0
Unemployment rate	+2.6%	+89.7	-1.2%	-17.9
<u>Architects</u>	-14,000	-8.7	+39,000	+36.1
Employed	-15,000	-9.6	+39,000	+37.9
Unemployed	+1,000	+25.0	0	0
Unemployment rate	+1.3%	+54.2	-0.6%	-13.9
<u>Authors</u>	+2,000	+2.4	+21,000	+32.8
Employed	+2,000	+2.4	+22,000	+35.5
Unemployed	0	0	-1,000	-50.0
Unemployment rate	0	0	-1.1%	-44.0
<u>Dancers</u>	-1,000	-5.9	+4,000	+33.3
Employed	0	0	+4,000	+40.0
Unemployed	"	"	"	"
Unemployment rate	"	"	"	"
<u>Designers</u>	+1,000	+0.2	+134,000	+32.3
Employed	-3,000	-0.6	+138,000	+35.1
Unemployed	+4,000	+28.6	-4,000	-18.2
Unemployment rate	+0.7%	+28.0	-2.0%	-38.5
<u>Musicians/Composers</u>	-7,000	-4.0	-3,000	-1.8
Employed	-8,000	-4.7	+7,000	+4.5
Unemployed	+1,000	+25.0	-10,000	-66.7
Unemployment rate	+0.8%	+33.3	-5.4%	-62.8
<u>Painters/Sculptors/Craft Artists and Artist Printmakers</u>				
Employed	-8,000	-3.4	+32,000	+16.7
Unemployed	-12,000	-5.2	+31,000	+16.7
Unemployment rate	+4,000	+133.3	+1,000	+16.7
Unemployment rate	+1.7%	+130.8	-0.3%	-9.1
<u>Photographers</u>	+13,000	+11.4	+8,000	+6.7
Employed	+11,000	+9.8	+10,000	+8.9
Unemployed	+2,000	+100.0	-2,000	-33.3
Unemployment rate	+1.2%	+63.2	-1.9%	-38.0
<u>Teachers of Art, Drama, and Music (higher ed.)</u>	+1,000	+2.2	+3,000	+6.9
Employed	0	0	+3,000	+7.1
Unemployed	"	"	0	0
Unemployment rate	+2.0%	+285.7	+0.5%	+22.7
<u>Other Artists**</u>	+1,000	+1.2	+18,000	+27.3
Employed	0	0	+20,000	+32.8
Unemployed	+1,000	+50.0	-2,000	-40.0
Unemployment rate	+3.8%	+165.2	-3.0%	-42.3

\* Data base is too small for reliable estimate

\*\* Not elsewhere classified

See note at bottom of Table 1.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics.